

Here is a generous selection from the profound, illuminating thoughts of the renowned visionary/priest Pierre Teilhard de Chardin on love and happiness. The passages gathered here, culled from the extensive body of his work, make some of his finest writing available to readers who might otherwise not know where to begin; those already familiar with his work will find *On Love and Happiness* a compendium of spiritually enriching, life-affirming ideas in a convenient format. All will benefit from a first—or renewed—acquaintance with this author, whose remarkable, passionate lines of thought extend from earliest prehistory to the ultimate purposes at the end of the universe and the fulfillment of time.

Teilhard de Chardin probes the innermost dynamics of love and celebrates it as “the most universal, tremendous, and mysterious of the cosmic forces,” viewing the growth of our ability to love as bound up with the destiny of the universe. These reflections offer luminous insights into the nature, role, and transformative potential of sexuality; the concept of “right love”; the place of passion and chastity in the scheme of things; the contributions of faith and science; love as a form of human energy integral to development of the person, individual relationships, and the human community; and the spiritual dimension of love as the balance point among man, woman, and God.

*On Love and Happiness* also explores the meaning of “the happy life” and “happiness” itself, defines “the best route leading to human happiness,” and shares specific ways one can adapt his or her lifestyle to move towards happiness. Teilhard de Chardin distinguishes

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*On Love  
& Happiness*





# On Love & Happiness

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Pierre Teilhard de Chardin



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*I*

*Passages on Love*



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# I

... Love is the most universal, the most tremendous and the most mysterious of the cosmic forces. After centuries of tentative effort, social institutions have externally diked and canalized it. Taking advantage of this situation, the moralists have tried to submit it to rules. But in constructing their theories they have never got beyond the level of an elementary empiricism influenced by out-of-date conceptions of matter and the relics of old taboos. Socially, in science, business and public affairs, men pretend not to know it, though under the surface it is everywhere. Huge, ubiquitous and always unsubdued—this wild force seems to have defeated all hopes of understanding and governing it. It is therefore allowed to run everywhere beneath our civilization. We are conscious of it, but all we ask of it is to amuse us, or not to harm us. Is it truly possible for humanity to continue to live and grow without asking itself how much truth and energy it is losing by neglecting its incredible power of love?

From the standpoint of spiritual evolution, which

we here assume, it seems that we can give a name and value to this strange energy of love. Can we not say quite simply that in its essence it is the attraction exercised on each unit of consciousness by the center of the universe in course of taking shape? It calls us to the great union, the realization of which is the only process at present taking place in nature. By this hypothesis, according to which (in agreement with the findings of psychological analysis) love is the primal and universal psychic energy, does not everything become clear around us, both for our minds and our actions? We may try to reconstruct the history of the world from outside by observing the play of atomic, molecular or cellular combinations in their various processes. We may attempt, still more efficaciously, this same task from within by following the progress made by conscious spontaneity and noting the successive stages achieved. The most telling and profound way of describing the evolution of the universe would undoubtedly be to trace the evolution of love.

In its most primitive forms, when life is scarcely individualized, love is hard to distinguish from molecular forces; one might think of it as a matter of chemisms or tactisms. Then little by little it becomes distinct, though still *confused* for a very long time with the simple function of reproduction. Not till hominization does it at last reveal the secret and



manifold virtues of its violence. "Hominized" love is distinct from all other love, because the "spectrum" of its warm and penetrating light is marvelously enriched. No longer only a unique and periodic attraction directed to material fertility; but an unbounded and continuous possibility of contact through spirit much more than through body; the play of countless subtle antennae seeking one another in the light and darkness of the soul; the pull towards mutual sensibility and completion, in which preoccupation with preserving the species gradually dissolves in the greater intoxication of two people consummating a world. It is in reality the universe that is pressing on, through woman, towards man. The whole question (the vital question for the earth) is that they shall recognize one another.

If man fails to recognize the true nature, the true object of his love, the confusion is vast and irremediable. Bent on assuaging a passion intended for the All on an object too small to satisfy it, he will strive to compensate a fundamental imbalance by materialism or an ever increasing multiplicity of experiments. His efforts will be fruitless—and in the eyes of one who can see the inestimable value of the "spiritual quantum" of man, a terrible waste. But let us put aside any sentimental feelings or virtuous indignation. Let us look very coolly as biologists or engineers, at the lurid atmosphere of our great

towns at evening. There, and everywhere else as well, the earth is continually dissipating its most marvelous power. This is pure loss. Earth is burning away, wasted on the empty air. How much energy do you think the spirit of the earth loses in a single night?

If only man would turn and see the reality of the universe shining in the spirit and through the flesh. He would then discover the reason for what has hitherto deceived and perverted his powers of love. Woman stands before him as the lure and symbol of the world. He cannot embrace her except by himself growing, in his turn, to a world scale. And because the world is always growing and always unfinished and always ahead of us, to achieve his love man is engaged in a limitless conquest of the universe and himself. In this sense, man can only attain woman by consummating a union with the universe. Love is a sacred reserve of energy; it is like the blood of spiritual evolution. This is the first revelation we receive from the sense of the earth.

From *Human Energy*,  
translated by J. M. Cohen, 32-34

. . . The mutual attraction of the sexes is so fundamental that any explanation of the world (biological, philosophical or religious) that does not succeed in finding it a *structurally essential* place in its system is virtually condemned. To find such a place for sexuality in a cosmic system based on union is particularly easy. But this place must be clearly defined, both for the future and the past. What exactly are the essence and direction of "passionate love" in a universe whose stuff is personality?

In its initial forms, and up to a very high stage in life, sexuality seems identified with propagation. Beings come together to prolong not themselves but what they have gained. So close is the link between pairing-off and reproduction that philosophers like Bergson have seen in it a proof that life has more existence than living beings; and religions as advanced as Christianity have hitherto based almost the whole of their moral code on the child.

But things look very different from the point of view to which the analysis of a structurally conver-

gent cosmos has brought us. That the dominant function of sexuality was at first to assure the preservation of the species is indisputable. This was so until the *state* of personality was established in man. But from the critical moment of hominization, another more essential role was developed for love, a role of which we are seemingly only just beginning to feel the importance; I mean the necessary synthesis of the two principles, male and female, in the building of the human personality. No moralist or psychologist has ever doubted that these partners find a mutual completion in the play of their reproductive function. But hitherto this has been regarded only as a *secondary* effect, linked as an accessory to the principal phenomenon of reproduction. In obedience to the laws of the personal universe, the importance of these factors is tending, if I am not mistaken, to be reversed. Man and woman for the child, still and for so long as life on earth has not reached maturity. But man and woman for one another increasingly and for ever.

In order to establish the truth of this picture, I cannot do otherwise or better than resort to the sole criterion that has guided our progress throughout this study: that is to say, bring the theory into the most perfect possible coherence with a vaster realm of reality. If man and woman were, I will say, principally for the child, then the role and power of love

would diminish as human individuality is achieved, and the density of population on the earth is reaching saturation point. But if man and woman are principally for one another, then we imagine that with the growth of humanization they will feel an increasing need to draw closer. Now our experience proves that this is the actual state of things and that the other is not. It must therefore be explained.

In the hypothesis here accepted of a universe in process of personalization, the fact that love is increasing instead of diminishing in the course of humanization has a very natural explanation, and extension into the future. In the human individual, as we have already said, evolution does not close on itself, but continues further towards a more perfect concentration, linked with further differentiation, also obtained by union. Woman is for man, we should say, precisely the end that is capable of releasing this forward movement. Through woman and woman alone, man can escape from the isolation in which, even if perfected, he would still be in danger of being enclosed. Hence it is no longer strictly correct to say that the mesh of the universe is, in our experience, the thinking monad. The complete human molecule is already around us: a more synthesized element and more spiritualized from the start, than the individual personality. It is a duality, comprising masculine and feminine together.

Here the cosmic role of sexuality appears in its full breadth. And here at the same time, the rules appear which will guide us in the mastery of that terrifying energy, in which the power that causes the universe to converge on itself passes through us.

The first of these rules is that love, in conformity with the general laws of creative union, contributes to the spiritual differentiations of the two beings which it brings together. The one must not absorb the other nor, still less, should the two lose themselves in the enjoyments of physical possession, which would signify a lapse into plurality and return to nothingness. This is current experience, but can only be properly understood in the context of spirit-matter. Love is an adventure and a conquest. It survives and develops like the universe itself only by perpetual discovery. The only right love is that between couples whose passion leads them both, one through the other, to a higher possession of their being. The gravity of offenses against love therefore is not that they outrage some sort of modesty or virtue. It is that they fritter away, by neglect or lust, the universe's reserves of personalization. This wastage is the true explanation of the disorders of "impurity." And at a higher degree in the development of union this same wastage occurs in a subtler form, changing love into a joint egoism.

... When two beings between whom a great love

is possible manage to meet among a swarm of other beings, they tend immediately to enclose themselves in the jealous possession of their mutual gain. Impelled by the fulfillment that has engulfed them, they try instinctively to shut themselves into one another, to the exclusion of the rest. And even if they succeed in overcoming the voluptuous temptations of absorption and repose, they attempt to reserve the promises of the future for their mutual discovery, as if they constituted a *two-person universe*.

Now after all that we have said about the probable structure of the spirit, it is clear that this dream is only a dangerous illusion. In virtue of the same principle that compelled "simple" personal elements to complete themselves in the pair, the pair in its turn must pursue the achievements that its growth requires beyond itself. And in two ways. On the one hand it must look outside itself for groupings of the same order with which to associate with a view to centering itself further. . . . On the other hand, the center towards which the two lovers converge by uniting must manifest its personality at the very heart of the circle in which their union wishes to isolate itself. Without coming out of itself, the pair will find its equilibrium only in a third being ahead of it. What name must we give to this mysterious "intruder"?

For so long as the sexualized elements of the

world had not reached the stage of personality, progeny alone could represent the reality in which the authors of generation in some way prolonged themselves. But as soon as love came into play, no longer only between parents but between two persons, the final goal necessarily appeared more or less indistinctly ahead of the lovers, the place at which not only their race but their personality would be at once preserved and completed. Then the "fall forward," of which we have already followed the adventures, begins once more. Stage by stage it must go on till the end of the world. And finally it is the total center itself, much more than the child, that appears necessary for the consolidation of love. Love is a three-term function: man, woman, and God. Its whole perfection and success are bound up with the harmonious balance of these three elements.

From *Human Energy*, translated by J. M. Cohen, 72-76



... A real nobility of passion lends wings—and that is why the best test for gauging the sublimity of a love would be to note how decisively it develops in the direction of a greater freedom of spirit. The more spiritual the affection, the less it sucks up into itself—and the stronger its impulse towards action.

... love stands as the threshold of another universe. Beyond the vibrations that are familiar to us, the rainbow of its merging colors is constantly and vigorously extending; but, for all the charm of the tints in the lower ranges, it is only in the direction of the “ultra” that the creation of light makes real progress. It is in those invisible—we might almost say immaterial—areas that we can look for true initiation into unity. *The depths we attribute to matter are no more than the reflection from the heights of spirit.*

All human experience and thought, I believe, show that this is undeniable.

... I have come to the point where, it seems to me, two phases in the creative transformation of human love are emerging for me. During a first

phase of humanity, man and woman concentrate upon the physical act of giving and the concern for reproduction: at the same time a growing nimbus of spiritual exchanges is gradually being built up around this fundamental act. At first this nimbus was no more than an imperceptible fringe; slowly, and yet ever more clearly, there is a shift, and the fruitfulness and mystery of union move into that zone: and it is on that side that the balance finally gives way and comes to rest. At that very moment, however, the center of physical union from which the light was radiating is found to be incapable of accepting any further intensification. The focus of attraction suddenly shifts further and further—endlessly, indeed—ahead. If the lovers are to be able to continue to increase their mutual possession in spirit, they have to turn away from the body and look for one another in God. Virginity rests upon chastity as thought rests upon life: each is arrived at through a reversal of direction, or by passing through one unique point.

Such a transformation, of course, cannot be effected instantaneously on the surface of the earth: time is essential. When you heat water, the whole volume does not turn into steam at once—the “liquid phase” and the “gaseous phase” are found together for some time, and this must necessarily be so. Nevertheless, that duality covers but one single

developing event—the direction and “dignity” of which are shared by the whole. Thus, at the present moment, physical union still retains its value and necessity for the human race; but its spiritual quality is now defined by the higher type of union to which it has served as the preliminary and which it now fosters. Within the noosphere, love is now undergoing a “change of state”; and it is in this new direction that mankind’s collective entry into God is being organized.

This is how I see the evolution of chastity.

There is no theoretical difficulty about this transformation of love. All that is needed to effect it is that the appeal of the *personal* divine center be felt with such intensity that it overcomes the natural attraction whose pull would tend prematurely to fling together the pairs of human monads.

From the practical point of view, however, I must confess that the suggestion presents such difficulty that what I have written here would be dismissed by nine people out of ten as overly ingenuous or even wildly extravagant. Does not universal experience show conclusively that spiritual loves have always come to a sordid end? Man is made to keep his feet firmly on the ground—flight has always been beyond our dreams. . . .

I am quite sure about my answer; yes, there have been madmen with such a dream, and that is why

we have now conquered the air. What paralyzes life is lack of faith and lack of courage. The difficulty lies not in solving problems but in expressing them correctly; and we can now see that it is biologically undeniable that unless we harness passion to the service of spirit there can be no progress. Sooner or later, then, and in spite of all our incredulity, the world will take this step—because the greater truth always prevails and the greater good emerges in the end.

The day will come when, after mastering the ether, the winds, the tides, gravity, we shall master the energies of love, for God. And then, for the second time in the history of the world, man will have made fire his servant.

From *The Evolution of Chastity* (unpublished),  
translated by René Hague



## 4

And this means but one thing, Lord; that through the whole width and breadth of the Real, through all its past and through all that it will become, through all that I undergo and all that I do, through all that I am bound by, through every enterprise, through my whole life's work, I can make my way to you, be one with you, and progress endlessly in that union.

With a fullness no man has conceived you realized, through your incarnation, love's threefold dream: to be so enveloped in the object of love as to be absorbed in it—endlessly to intensify its presence—and, without ever knowing surfeit, to be lost in it.

I pray that Christ's influence, spiritually substantial, physically mortifying, may ever spread wider among all beings, and that thence it may pour down upon me and bring me life.

I pray that this brief and limited contact with the sacramental species may introduce me to a universal

and eternal communion with Christ, with his omnipotent will and his boundless mystical body.

From *Writings in Time of War*, translated by  
René Hague, 217-218

What I cry out for, like every being, with my whole life and all my earthly passion, is something very different from an equal to cherish: it is a God to adore.

To adore . . . that means to lose oneself in the unfathomable, to plunge into the inexhaustible, to find peace in the incorruptible, to be absorbed in defined immensity, to offer oneself to the fire and the transparency, to annihilate oneself in proportion as one becomes more deliberately conscious of oneself, and to give of one's deepest to that whose depth has no end. Whom, then, can we adore?

The more man becomes man, the more will he become prey to a need, a need that is always more explicit, more subtle and more magnificent, the need to adore.

Disperse, O Jesus, the clouds with your lightning! Show yourself to us as the Mighty, the Radiant, the Risen! Come to us once again as the Pantocrator who filled the solitude of the cupolas in the ancient basilicas! Nothing less than this Parousia is needed

to counterbalance and dominate in our hearts the glory of the world that is coming into view. And so that we should triumph over the world with you, come to us clothed in the glory of the world.

From *Le Milieu Divin*, translated by Bernard Wall, 117-118



... For the last century, without greatly noticing it, we have been undergoing a remarkable transformation in the range of intellect. To discover and know has always been a deep tendency of our nature. Can we not recognize it already in caveman? But it is only yesterday that this essential need to know has become explicit and changed into a vital, autonomous function, taking precedence in our lives over our preoccupation with food and drink. Now, if I am not mistaken, this phenomenon of the individualization of our highest psychological functions is not only far from having reached its limits in the field of pure thought, but is also tending to develop in a neighboring realm, which has remained practically undefined and unexplored: the "*terra ignota*" of the affections and love.

Paradoxically, love (I understand love here in the strict sense of "passion"), despite (or perhaps precisely because of) its ubiquity and violence, has hitherto been excluded from any rational systematization of the energy of man. Empirically, morality has

succeeded more or less successfully in codifying its practice with a view to the maintenance and material propagation of the race. But has anyone seriously thought that beneath this turbulent power (which is nevertheless well known to be the inspirer of genius, the arts, and all poetry) a formidable creative urge has remained in reserve, and that man will only be truly man from the day when he has not only checked, but transformed, utilized, and liberated it? Today, for our century, avid to lose no energy and to control the most intimate psychological mechanism, light seems to be beginning to break. Love, like thought, is still in full growth in the noosphere. The excess of its growing energies over the daily diminishing needs of human propagation becomes every day more manifest. And love is therefore tending in a purely hominized form, to fill a much larger function than the simple urge to reproduction. Between man and woman a specific and mutual power of spiritual sensitization and fertilization is probably still slumbering. It demands to be released, so that it may flow irresistibly towards the true and beautiful. Its awakening is certain. Expansion, I have said, of an ancient power. The expression is undoubtedly too weak. Beyond a certain degree of sublimation spiritualized love, by the boundless possibilities of intuition and communication it contains, penetrates the unknown; it will in

our sight take its place, in the mysterious future, with the group of new faculties and consciousnesses that is awaiting us.

. . . Union, the true upward union in the spirit, ends by establishing the elements it dominates in their own perfection. *Union differentiates.* In virtue of this fundamental principle, elementary personalities can, and can *only* affirm themselves by acceding to a psychic unity or higher soul. But this always on one condition: that the higher center to which they come to join *without mingling together* has its own autonomous reality. *Since there is no fusion or dissolution* of the elementary personalities the center in which they join *must necessarily be distinct from them, that is to say have its own personality.*

Hence we have the following formula for the supreme goal towards which human energy is tending: an organic plurality the elements of which find the consummation of their own personality in a paroxysm of mutual union and limpidity: the whole body being supported by the unifying influence of a *distinct center* of super-personalization.

This last condition or qualification has considerable importance. It demonstrates that the noosphere in fact *physically* requires, for its maintenance and functioning, the existence in the universe of a true pole of psychic convergence: a center different from all the other centers which it "super-centers" by

assimilation: a personality distinct from all the personalities it perfects by uniting with them. The world would not function if there did not exist, somewhere ahead in time and space, "a cosmic point Omega" of total synthesis.

Consideration of this Omega will allow us to define more completely in a concluding chapter, the hidden nature of what we have till now called vaguely enough, "human energy."

#### LOVE, A HIGHER FORM OF HUMAN ENERGY

. . . In us and around us, we have been able to conclude, the world's units are continually and increasingly personalizing, by approaching a goal of unification, itself personal; in such a way that the world's essential energy definitely radiates from this goal and finally flows back towards it; having confusedly set the cosmic mass in motion, it emerges from it to form the noosphere.

What name should we give to an influence of this sort?

Only one is possible: love.

Love is by definition the word we use for attractions of a personal nature. Since once the universe has become a thinking one everything in the last resort moves in and towards personality, it is neces-

sarily love, a kind of love, which forms and will increasingly form, in its pure state, the material of human energy.

Is it possible to verify *a posteriori* this conclusion which is imposed on us *a priori* by the conditions of functioning and maintenance of the thinking activity of the earth's surface?

Yes, I believe so. And in two different ways.

*Psychologically* first, by observing that love carried to a certain degree of universality by a perception of the center Omega is the only power capable of totalizing the possibilities of human action without internal contradictions.

Then *historically*, by observing that such a universal love actually presents itself to our experience as the highest term of a transformation already begun in the mass of the noosphere.

Let us try to demonstrate this.

## I. LOVE, THE TOTALIZING PRINCIPLE OF HUMAN ENERGY

Those who greet with the greatest skepticism any suggestion tending to promote a general coordination of thought on earth are precisely the first to recognize and deplore the state of division in which human energies are vegetating: disconnected actions by the individual, disconnected individuals in

society. It is evident, they say, that a vast power is neutralized and lost in this unordered movement. But how can you expect dust like this to cohere? Themselves already divided by nature, these human particles continue to repel one another irremediably. You might perhaps force them mechanically together. But to infuse a common soul into them is a physical impossibility.

The strength and weakness of all these objections to the possibility of some eventual unification of the world seem to depend on the fact that they insidiously exaggerate appearances which are only too real, without being willing to take into account certain new factors already perceptible in humanity. The pluralists always reason as if no principle of connection existed, or tended to exist, in nature outside the vague or superficial relations habitually examined by common sense and sociology. They are at bottom jurists and fixists who cannot imagine anything around them except what seems to them always to have been there.

But let us see what will happen in our souls the instant there emerges, at the moment fixed by the march of evolution, the perception of an animated universal center of convergence. Let us imagine (this is no fiction, as we shall soon state) a man who has become conscious of his personal relations with a supreme personality, to whom he is led to add

himself by the entire play of cosmic activities. In such a man, and starting with him, a process of unification has inevitably begun, which will be divided into the following stages: totalization of each operation in regard to the individual; totalization of the individual in regard to himself; and finally, totalization of individuals in collective humanity. All this "impossibility" taking place naturally under the influence of love.

#### *A. Totalization by Love of Individual Actions*

In the divided state in which the pluralists consider us (that is to say outside the conscious influence of Omega) we most often act only from a tiny portion of ourselves. Whether eating or working, or doing mathematics or a crossword puzzle, man is only partially engaged in his activity, with only one or another of his faculties. His senses, or his limbs, or his reason function, but never his heart itself. Human action but not the action of a whole man, as a scholastic would say. That is why after a life of highest effort, a scientist or thinker may end up impoverished and desiccated—disillusioned; his mind but not his personality has worked on inanimate objects. He has given himself; he has not been able to love.

Let us now observe the same forms of activity in the light of Omega. Omega, in which all things

converge, is reciprocally that from which all things radiate. Impossible to place it as a point at the peak of the universe without at the same time diffusing its presence within each smallest advance of evolution. The meaning of this is nothing less than this: that *for him who has seen it* everything, however humble, *provided it places itself in the line of progress,* is warmed, illumined, and animated, and consequently becomes an object to which he gives his *whole* adhesion. What was cold, dead, impersonal for him who cannot see, becomes charged for those who see not only with life but with a stronger life than theirs; in such a way that they feel themselves seized and assimilated, as they act, to a far greater degree than they themselves are seizing and assimilating. Where the former only finds an object with limited reactions, the latter are able to expand with the totality of their powers—to love the lowest of their tasks as passionately as if they could touch or caress it. In the external appearance of the operation there is no change. But what a difference in the stuff of the action, in the intensity of the gift! The whole distance between consumption and communion.

And this is the first step in totalization. Within a world of personal and convergent structure, in which attraction becomes love, man discovers that he can give himself boundlessly to everything he



does. In the least of his acts he can make an entire contact with the universe, with the whole surface and depth of his being. Everything has become a complete nourishment to him.

*B. Totalization of the Individual on Himself by Love*

That each of our separate pursuits can become *total* under the animating influence of Omega is already a marvelous utilization of human energy. But no sooner has this first transfiguration of our activities taken shape than it tends to enlarge into another more profound metamorphosis. By the very fact that they become total, each one in itself, our activities are logically led to totalize, merged together in a single act. Let us see how.

The immediate effect of universal love, rendered possible by Omega, is to attach to each of our actions a root identity of passionate involvement and gift of self. What will the influence of this common ground (one might call it this new climate) be on our inner life? Shall we dissolve under its pleasant warmth? Will it blur the clear outline of the objects around us with an atmosphere of mirage? Will it take our attention from the individual and tangible, to absorb us in a confused sense of the universal? If we fear this, it is because we have again forgotten that in the direction of spirit union differentiates. It

is undoubtedly true that once I have discovered Omega, all things become for me in some ways the same thing; so that whatever I do I shall have the impression of doing one and the same thing. But this fundamental unity has nothing in common with a melting into homogeneity. In the first place, far from weakening, it accentuates the outline of the elements it assembles; for Omega, the sole object of desire, only forms for our eyes and offers itself to our touch in the completion of those elementary advances by which the fabric of evolution is empirically taking shape. But there is more to it than this. Love not only impregnates the universe like an oil that will revive its colors. It does not simply bind the clouded dust of our experiences into a common lucidity. It is a true *synthesis* which operates on the grouped bundle of our faculties. And this is indeed the point that it is most important to understand.

In the superficial course of our existences, there is a difference between seeing and thinking, between understanding and loving, between giving and receiving, between growing and shrinking, between living and dying. But what will happen to all those contradictions once their diversity has revealed itself in Omega as an infinite variety of forms of a single universal contact? Without any sort of radical disappearance they will tend to combine into a common sum, in which their still recognizable

plurality will burst forth in ineffable riches. Not any sort of interference, but a resonance. Why should we be surprised? Do we not know, at a lesser degree of intensity, a similar phenomenon in our own experience? When a man loves a woman with a strong and noble passion that exalts his being above its common level, that man's life, his powers of feeling and creation, his whole universe, are definitely held and at the same time sublimated by his love of that woman. But however necessary the woman may be to that man, to reflect, reveal, transmit, and "personalize" the world for him, she is still not the center of the world! If therefore the love of one unit for another is powerful enough to melt (without fusing) the multitude of our perceptions and emotions into a single impression, how great must be the vibration drawn from our beings by their encounter with Omega?

Indeed we are called by the music of the universe to reply, each with his own pure and incommunicable harmonic. When, as love for the All advances in our hearts, we feel stretching out beyond the diversity of our efforts and desires the bounding simplicity of an urge in which the innumerable shades of passion and action mingle in exaltation without ever becoming confused, then, within the mass formed by human energy, we shall each approach the plenitude of our powers and personality.

### *C. Totalization by Love of Individuals in Humanity*

The transition from the individual to the collective is the present crucial problem confronting human energy. And it must be recognized that the first steps towards its solution only increase our consciousness of its difficulties. On the one side the ever tighter network of economic links, together with an indubitable biological determinism, inevitably presses us against one another. On the other, in the course of this compression, we seem to feel the most precious part of ourselves—our spontaneity and liberty—perishing. Totalitarianism and personalism: contrary to our theoretical expectations, must these two functions necessarily vary in inverse proportion to one another? In order to build the future (for we must certainly go forward) have we to choose between the Charybdis of collectivism and the Scylla of anarchy, between a mechanizing symbiosis and a devitalizing dispersion, between a termite colony and the Brownian movement? This dilemma, long evident to the clear-sighted, seems now suddenly to be entering the field of public notice. For the last year there has been no review or conference in which the question has not been broached. But the outline of a good solution has, alas, never been put forward.

The reason, in my opinion, for the disturbing checks suffered by humanity during the last century in its efforts to organize itself is not to be attributed to some natural obstacle inherent in the undertaking itself, but to the fact that the attempts at grouping are made by inverting the natural order of factors of the projected union. Let me explain.

To totalize without depersonalizing. To save the assemblage and the units at the same time. Everyone agrees that this is the dual task to be accomplished. But how do present-day social groups (democrats, communists, fascists) rate the values they theoretically agree in wishing to preserve? They all consider the individual as secondary and transitory, and place the primacy of the pure totality at the head of their programs. In all the systems of human organization battling before our eyes, it is assumed that the final state towards which the noosphere is tending is a body without an individualized soul, a faceless organism, a diffuse humanity, an *Impersonality!*

Now once this point of departure is accepted, it vitiates the whole subsequent progress of the operation, to the extent of making it impractical. In a synthesizing process, the character finally impressed on the unified elements is necessarily that which permeates the active unifying principle. The crystal gives geometrical form to, the cell animates the

matter that joins it. If the universe is tending finally to become *something*, how can it keep a place in itself for *Someone*? If the peak of human evolution is regarded as impersonal by nature, the units accepting it will inevitably, in spite of all efforts to the contrary, see their personality diminishing under its influence. And this is exactly what is happening. The servants of material progress or of racial entities may try their hardest to emerge into freedom, but they are fatally sucked in and assimilated by the determinisms they construct. Their own machinery turns them into machines. The true Hindu karma. And at this moment all that remains to control the machinery of human energy is the use of brute force—the same force that is very logically being offered us at present as an object of worship.

Now this is treason against spirit, and at the same time a grave mistake in human technology. A system formed of elements of consciousness can only cohere on a basis of immanence. Not force but love above us; and therefore, *at the beginning*, the recognized existence of an Omega that makes possible a universal love.

The mistake, as we have said, of modern social doctrines is to present enthusiasts for human effort with an *impersonal* humanity. What would happen on the day we recognized, instead of this blind divinity, the presence of a conscious center of total

convergence? Then by the opposite determinism to the one against which we are struggling, individualities, caught in the irresistible current of human totalization, would feel themselves strengthened by the very movement that brings them together. The more they grouped themselves under a personality, the more forcibly they would themselves become personal. And quite naturally, without effort, by virtue of the properties of love.

We have already several times stressed the capital truth that "union differentiates." Love is only the concrete expression of this metaphysical principle. Let us imagine an earth on which human beings were primarily (and even in a sense exclusively) concerned with achieving global accession to a passionately desired universal being, whom each one would recognize as a living presence in the most incommunicable features of his neighbor. In such a world, constraint would become useless as a means of keeping individuals in the most favorable condition for action, of guiding them in free competition towards better social groupings, of making them accept the restrictions and sacrifices imposed by a certain human selection, of deciding them once and for all not to waste their power of love but to raise it carefully and husband it for the final union. Under these conditions life would finally escape (supreme liberation) from the tyranny of material coercions;

and a personality of increasing freedom would grow up without opposition within the totality.

“Love one another.” Those words were pronounced two thousand years ago. But today they sound again in our ears in a very different tone. For centuries charity and fraternity could only be presented as a code of moral perfection, or perhaps as a practical method of diminishing the pains or frictions of earthly life. Now since the existence of the noosphere, on the one hand, and the vital necessity we are under of preserving it, on the other, have been revealed to our minds, the voice which speaks takes on a more imperious tone. It no longer says only: “Love one another in order to be perfect,” but adds, “Love one another or you perish.” “Realistic” minds are welcome to smile at dreamers who speak of a humanity cemented and armored no longer with brutality but with love. They are welcome to deny that a maximum of physical power may coincide with a maximum of gentleness and goodness. Their critical skepticism cannot prevent the theory and experience of spiritual energy from combining to warn us that *we have reached a decisive point in human evolution*, at which the only way forward is in the direction of a common passion, a “conspiracy.”

To go on putting our hopes in a social order obtained by external violence would simply mean



to abandon all hope of carrying the spirit of earth to its limits.

Now human energy, being the expression of a movement as irresistible and infallible as the universe itself, cannot possibly be prevented by any obstacle from freely reaching the natural goal of its evolution.

Therefore, despite all checks and all improbabilities, we are inevitably approaching a new age, in which the world will throw off its chains and at last give itself up to the power of its inner affinities.

Either we must doubt the value of everything around us, or we must utterly believe in the possibility, and I should now add, in the inevitable consequences, of universal love.

What are these consequences?

So far, in our study of the socio-totalizing love of human energy, we have principally considered its singular property of joining and articulating the thinking molecules of the noosphere without turning them into machines. But this is only the negative face of the phenomenon. Love has not only the virtue of uniting without depersonalizing, but in uniting it ultra-personalizes. From this pass that we have reached, what horizons appear before us in the skies of humanity?

Here, we must first of all look backwards, to the point where we left the individual human nucleus,

at the completion of its transformation by love. Under Omega's influence, we said, each separate soul becomes capable of breathing itself out in a single act into which the incalculable plurality of its perceptions and activities, its sufferings and desires, passes without confusion. Well, the sum of elementary energies constituting the global mass of human energy seems to be moving towards an analogous metamorphosis of a far higher order. We have followed, in the individual, the gradual assumption of the emotions, aspirations, and actions in an indefinable operation *sui generis*, which is all these things at once and something more as well. The same phenomenon, on an incomparably greater scale, tends to take place under the same Omega influence in terrestrial thought collected as a whole. And indeed when the whole of humanity, operating and experiencing at the same time with its exploratory surface, the center towards which it is converging; when the same fluid passion suffuses and connects the free diversity of attitudes, points of view and efforts, each represented in the universe by a particular unit of the human myriad; when the overflowing multitude of individual contradictions harmonizes in the profound simplicity of a single desire, what is all this but the genesis of a *collective and*

*unique action*, in which, in the sole conceivable form of love, the powers of personality comprised in the noosphere are realizing themselves, as they approach maturity, that is to say, their final confluence?

Totalization of total human energy in a total love.

The ideal glimpsed in their dreams by the world technicians.

This, psychologically, is what love can do if carried to a universal degree.

But is this miracle *really* moving towards realization?

If it is, some traces of this prodigious transformation must be perceptible in history. Can we recognize them? This is what I have still to seek and show.

## 2. LOVE, THE HISTORICAL PRODUCT OF HUMAN EVOLUTION

The above analysis of the synthesizing power of love over the inner life was not made, and indeed could not be made, without some visible model.

Where then in nature today does a first sketch, a first approach to the total act of which we were apparently dreaming exist? Nowhere more clearly, I think, than in the act of Christian love as it can be performed by a modern believer for whom the crea-

tion has come to be expressed in terms of evolution. In such a man's eyes, the world's history bears the form of a vast cosmogenesis, in the course of which all the threads of reality converge without fusing in a Christ who is at the same time personal and universal. Strictly and unmetaphorically, the Christian who understands both the essence of his creed and nature's linkages in time and space, finds himself in the fortunate position of being, by all his various activities and in union with the crowd of his fellows, capable of surrendering to a unique act of communion. Whether he lives or dies, *by* his life and *by* his death, he in some sense completes his God, and is at the same time mastered by him. In short, comparable in every way to the Omega point which our theory led us to foresee, Christ (provided he reveals himself in the full realism of his incarnation) *tends to produce exactly* the spiritual totalization that we expected.

In itself the existence, even in detachment, of a state of consciousness endowed with such riches would bring, if fully established, a substantial verification of the views that we have set out on the ultimate nature of human energy. But it is possible to push the demonstration very much further by observing that the appearance in man of the love of

God, understood in the fullness that we give it here,  
is not a simple sporadic accident, but appears as the  
regular product of a long evolution.

From *Human Energy*, translated by J. M. Cohen,  
128-130, 144-155

We are accustomed to consider (and with what a refinement of analysis!) only the sentimental face of love, the joy and miseries it causes us. It is in its natural dynamism and its evolutionary significance that I shall be dealing with it here, with a view to determining the ultimate phases of the phenomenon of man.

Considered in its full biological reality, love—that is to say, the affinity of being with being—is not peculiar to man. It is a general property of all life and as such it embraces, in its varieties and degrees, all the forms successively adopted by organized matter. In the mammals, so close to ourselves, it is easily recognized in its different modalities: sexual passion, parental instinct, social solidarity, and so forth. Farther off, that is to say lower down on the tree of life, analogies are more obscure until they become so faint as to be imperceptible. But this is the place to repeat what I said earlier when we were discussing the “*within* of things.” If there were no real internal propensity to unite, even at a prodi-

giously rudimentary level—indeed in the molecule itself—it would be physically impossible for love to appear higher up, with us, in “hominized” form. By rights, to be certain of its presence in ourselves, we should assume its presence, at least in an inchoate form, in everything that is. And in fact if we look around us at the confluent ascent of consciousness, we see it is not lacking anywhere. Plato felt this and has immortalized the idea in his *Dialogues*. Later, with thinkers like Nicolas of Cusa, medieval philosophy returned technically to the same notion. Driven by the forces of love, the fragments of the world seek each other so that the world may come to being. This is no metaphor; and it is much more than poetry. Whether as a force or a curvature, the universal gravity of bodies, so striking to us, is merely the reverse or shadow of that which really moves nature. To perceive cosmic energy “at the fount” we must, if there is a *within* of things, go down into the internal or radial zone of spiritual attractions.

Love in all its subtleties is nothing more, and nothing less, than the more or less direct trace marked on the heart of the element by the psychical convergence of the universe upon itself.

This, if I am not mistaken, is the ray of light which will help us to see more clearly around us.

We are distressed and pained when we see mod-

ern attempts at human collectivization ending up, contrary to our expectations and theoretical predictions, in a lowering and an enslavement of consciousnesses. But so far how have we gone about the business of unification? A material situation to be defended; a new industrial field to be opened up, better conditions for a social class or less favored nations—those are the only and very mediocre grounds on which we have so far tried to get together. There is no cause to be surprised if, in the footsteps of animal societies, we become mechanized in the very play of association. Even in the supremely intellectual activity of science (at any rate as long as it remains purely speculative and abstract) the impact of our souls only operates obliquely and indirectly. Contact is still superficial, involving the danger of yet another servitude. Love alone is capable of uniting living beings in such a way as to complete and fulfill them, for it alone takes them and joins them by what is deepest in themselves. This is a fact of daily experience. At what moment do lovers come into the most complete possession of themselves if not when they say they are lost in each other? In truth, does not love every instant achieve all around us, in the couple or the team, the magic feat, the feat reputed to be contradictory, of “personalizing” by totalizing? And if that is what it can achieve daily on a small scale, why should it not re-



peat this one day on worldwide dimensions?

Mankind, the spirit of the earth, the synthesis of individuals and peoples, the paradoxical conciliation of the element with the whole, and of unity with multitude—all these are called Utopian and yet they are biologically necessary. And for them to be incarnated in the world all we may well need is to imagine our power of loving developing until it embraces the total of men and of the earth.

It may be said that this is the precise point at which we are invoking the impossible. Man's capacity, it may seem, is confined to giving his affection to one human being or to very few. Beyond that radius the heart does not carry, and there is only room for cold justice and cold reason. To love all and everyone is a contradictory and false gesture that only leads in the end to loving no one.

To that I would answer that if, as you claim, a universal love is impossible, how can we account for that irresistible instinct in our hearts which leads us towards unity whenever and in whatever direction our passions are stirred? A sense of the universe, a sense of the *all*, the nostalgia which seizes us when confronted by nature, beauty, music—these seem to be an expectation and awareness of a Great Presence. The "mystics" and their commentators apart, how has psychology been able so consistently to ignore this fundamental vibration whose ring can

be heard by every practiced ear at the basis, or rather at the summit, of every great emotion? Resonance to the All—the keynote of pure poetry and pure religion. Once again: what does this phenomenon, which is born with thought and grows with it, reveal if not a deep accord between two realities which seek each other; the severed particle which trembles at the approach of “the rest”?

We are often inclined to think that we have exhausted the various natural forms of love with a man’s love for his wife, his children, his friends and to a certain extent for his country. Yet precisely the most fundamental form of passion is missing from this list, the one which, under the pressure of an involuting universe, precipitates the elements one upon the other in the Whole—cosmic affinity and hence cosmic sense. A universal love is not only psychologically possible; it is the only complete and final way in which we are able to love.

But, with this point made, how are we to explain the appearance all around us of mounting repulsion and hatred? If such a strong potentiality is besieging us from within and urging us to union, what is it waiting for to pass from potentiality to action? Just this, no doubt: that we should overcome the “antipersonalist” complex which paralyzes us, and make up our minds to accept the possibility, indeed the reality, of some *source* of love and *object* of love at

the summit of the world above our heads. So long as it absorbs or appears to absorb the person, collectivity kills the love that is trying to come to birth. As such collectivity is essentially unlovable. That is where philanthropic systems break down. Common sense is right. It is impossible to give oneself to an anonymous number. But if the universe ahead of us assumes a face and a heart, and so to speak personifies itself, then in the atmosphere created by this focus the elemental attraction will immediately blossom. Then, no doubt, under the heightened pressure of an infolding world, the formidable energies of attraction, still dormant between human molecules, will burst forth.

The discoveries of the last hundred years, with their unitary perspectives, have brought a new and decisive impetus to our sense of the world, to our sense of the earth, and to our human sense. Hence the rise of modern pantheism. But this impetus will only end by plunging us back into supermatter unless it leads us towards someone.

For the failure that threatens us to be turned into success, for the concurrence of human monads to come about, it is necessary and sufficient for us that we should extend our science to its farthest limits and recognize and accept (as being necessary to close and balance space-time) not only some vague

future existence, but also, as I must now stress, the radiation *as a present reality* of that mysterious center of our centers which I have called Omega.

From *The Phenomenon of Man*, translated by Bernard Wall,  
264-268



## II

# *Reflections on Happiness*

In the world of mechanized matter, all bodies obey the laws of a universal gravitation; similarly, in the world of vitalized matter, all organized beings, even the very lowest, steer themselves and progress towards that quarter in which the greatest measure of well-being is to be found.

One might well imagine, then, that a speaker could hardly choose an easier subject than happiness. He is a living being addressing other living beings, and he might well be pardoned for believing that his audience contains none but such as are already in agreement with him and are familiar with his ideas.

In practice, however, the task I have set myself today turns out to be much nicer and more complex.

Like all other animate beings, man, it is true, has an essential craving for happiness. In man, however, this fundamental demand assumes a new and complicated form—for he is not simply a living being

with greater sensibility and greater vibratory power than other living beings. By virtue of his "hominization" he has become a reflective and critical living being—and his gift of reflection brings with it two other formidable properties, the power to perceive what may be possible, and the power to foresee the future. The emergence of this dual power is sufficient to disturb and confuse the hitherto serene and consistent ascent of life. Perception of the possible, and awareness of the future—when these two combine, they not only open up for us an inexhaustible store of hopes and fears, but they also allow those hopes and fears to range far afield in every direction. Where the animal seems to find no difficulties to obstruct its infallible progress towards what will bring it satisfaction, man, on the other hand, cannot take a single step in any direction without meeting a problem for which, ever since he became man, he has constantly and unsuccessfully been trying to find a final and universal solution.

"*De vita beata*," in the ancient phrase—on the happy life: what, in fact, is happiness?

For centuries this has been the subject of endless books, investigations, individual and collective experiments, one after another; and, sad to relate, there has been complete failure to reach unanimity. For many of us, in the end, the only practical conclu-

sion to be drawn from the whole discussion is that it is useless to continue the search. Either the problem is insoluble—there is no true happiness in this world—or there can be only an infinite number of particular solutions: the problem itself defies solution. Being happy is a matter of personal taste. You, for your part, like wine and good living. I prefer cars, poetry, or helping others. “Liking is as unaccountable as luck.” You must often, I am sure, have heard that sort of remark, and it may well be that you are a little inclined to agree.

What I want to do this evening is to confront fairly and squarely this relativist (and basically pessimist) skepticism shared by so many of our contemporaries, by showing you that, even for man, the general direction in which happiness lies is by no means so ill-defined as it is taken to be: provided always that we confine our inquiry to the search for those joys which are essential and, in so doing, take as our basis what we are taught by science and biology.

I cannot, unfortunately, give you happiness, but I do hope that I may be able at least to help you to find it.

What I have to say falls into two parts. In the first, which will be primarily theoretical, we shall try together to define the best route leading to human happiness.



In the second part, which will serve as a conclusion, we shall consider how we must adapt our individual lives to these general axes which run towards happiness.



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## 8. The Theoretical Axes of Happiness

### A. THE ROOT OF THE PROBLEM: THREE DIFFERENT ATTITUDES TO LIFE

If we are to understand more clearly how the problem of happiness presents itself to us, and why we find ourselves at a loss when we meet it, it is essential to start by taking a comprehensive view of the whole position. By this I mean that we must distinguish three fundamental initial attitudes to life adopted by men as a matter *of fact*.

Here an analogy may well be a useful guide.

Let us imagine a party of tourists who have set out to climb a difficult peak, and let us take a look at them some hours after they have started. By this time we may suppose the party to be divided into three sorts of elements.

Some are regretting having left the inn. The fatigue and risks involved seem out of all proportion to the value of a successful climb. They decide to turn back.

Others are not sorry that they set out. The sun is shining, and there is a beautiful view. But what is the point of climbing any higher? Surely it is better to enjoy the mountain from here, in the open meadow or deep in the wood. And so they stretch out on the grass, or explore the neighborhood until it is time for a picnic meal.

And lastly there are the others, the real mountaineers, who keep their eyes fixed on the peaks they have sworn to climb.

The tired—the hedonists—the enthusiasts.

Three types of men—and, deep within our own selves, we hold the germ of all three. And, what is more, it is into these three types that the mankind in which we live and move has always been divided.

#### I. FIRST, THE TIRED (OR THE PESSIMISTS)

For this first category of men, existence is a mistake or a failure. We do not fit in—and so the best thing we can do is, as gracefully as possible, to retire from the game. If this attitude is carried to its extreme, and expressed in terms of a learned doctrinal system, it leads in the end to the wisdom of the Hindus, according to which the universe is an illusion and a prison—or to a pessimism such as Schopenhauer's. But, in a milder and commoner form, the same attitude emerges and can be recognized in

any number of practical decisions that are only too familiar to you. "What is the good of trying to find the answer? . . . Why not leave the savages to their savagery and the ignorant to their ignorance? What is the point of science? What is the point of the machine? Is it not better to lie down than to stand up? Better to be dead than asleep in bed?" And all this amounts to saying, at least by implication, that it is better to be less than to be more—and that best of all would be not to be at all.

## 2. SECOND, THE HEDONISTS (OR PLEASURE-SEEKERS)

For men of this second type, to be is certainly better than not to be. But we must be careful to note that in this case "to be" has a special meaning. For the followers of this school, to be, or to live, does not mean to act, but simply to take your fill of this present moment. To enjoy each moment and each thing, husbanding it jealously so that nothing of it be allowed to be lost—and above all with no thought of shifting one's ground—that is what they mean by wisdom. When we have had enough, then we can lie back on the grass, or stretch our legs, or look at the view from another spot. And meanwhile, what is more, we shall not rule out the possibility of turning back downhill. We refuse, how-

ever, to risk anything for the sake of or on the chance of the future—unless, in an overrefinement of sensibility, danger incurred for its own sake goes to our heads, whether it be in order to enjoy the thrill of taking a chance or to feel the shuddering grip of fear.

This is our own version, in an oversimplified form, of the old pagan hedonism found in the school of Epicurus. In literary circles such has recently been the tendency, at any rate, of a Paul Morand or a Montherlant—or (and here it is far more subtle) of a Gide (the Gide of *Fruits of the Earth*), whose ideal of life is to drink without ever quenching (rather, indeed, in such a way as to increase) one's thirst—and this with no idea of restoring one's vigor, but simply from a desire to drain, ever more avidly, each new source.

### 3. FINALLY, THE ENTHUSIASTS

By these I mean those for whom living is an ascent and a discovery. To men in this third category, not only is it better to be than not to be, but they are convinced that it is always possible—and the possibility has a unique value—to attain a fuller measure of being. For these conquerors, enamored of the adventurous, being is inexhaustible—not in Gide's way, like a precious stone with innumerable

facets which one can never tire of turning round and round—but like a focus of warmth and light to which one can always draw closer. We may laugh at such men and say that they are ingenuous, or we may find them tiresome; but at the same time it is they who have made us what we are, and it is from them that tomorrow's earth is going to emerge.

Pessimism and return to the past; enjoyment of the present moment; drive towards the future. There, as I was saying, we have three fundamental attitudes to life. Inevitably, therefore, we find ourselves back at the very heart of our subject: a confrontation between three contrasting forms of happiness.

### *1. First the Happiness of Tranquillity*

No worry, no risk, no effort. Let us cut down our contacts, let us restrict our needs, let us dim our lights, toughen our protective skin, withdraw into our shell. The happy man is the man who attains a minimum of thought, feeling, and desire.

### *2. Second the Happiness of Pleasure*

Static pleasure or, better still, pleasure that is constantly renewed. The goal of life is not to act and create, but to make use of opportunities. And this again means less effort, or no more effort than is needed to reach out for a clean glass or a fresh

drink. Lie back and relax as much as possible, like a leaf drinking in the rays of the sun—shift your position constantly so that you may feel more fully: that is the recipe for happiness. The happy man is the man who can savor to the highest degree the moment he holds in his hands.

### *3. Finally the Happiness of Growth*

From this third point of view, happiness has no existence nor value in itself, as an object which we can pursue and attain as such. It is no more than the sign, the effect, the reward (we might say) of appropriately directed action: a by-product, as Aldous Huxley says somewhere, of effort. Modern hedonism is wrong, accordingly, in suggesting that some sort of renewal of ourselves, no matter what form it takes, is all that is needed for happiness. Something more is required, for no change brings happiness unless the way in which it is effected involves an *ascent*. The happy man is therefore the man who, without any direct search for happiness, inevitably finds joy as an added bonus in the act of forging ahead and attaining the fullness and finality of his own self.

Happiness of tranquillity, happiness of pleasure, and happiness of development: we have only to look around us to see that at the level of man it is



between these three lines of progress that life hesitates and its current is divided.

Is it true, as we are so often told, that our choice is determined only by the dictates of individual taste and temperament?

Or is the contrary true, that somewhere we can find a reason, indisputable because objective, for deciding that one of these three roads is absolutely the best, and is therefore the only road which can lead us to real happiness?

## B. THE ANSWER GIVEN BY THE FACTS

### I. GENERAL SOLUTION: FULLER CONSCIOUSNESS AS THE GOAL

For my part, I am absolutely convinced that such a criterion, indisputable and objective, does exist—and that it is not mysterious and hidden away but lies open for all to see. I hold, too, that in order to see it all we have to do is to look around and examine nature in the light of the most recent achievements of physics and biology—in the light, that is, of our new ideas about the great phenomenon of evolution.

The time has come, as you must know, when nobody any longer retains any serious doubts about

this: the universe is not "ontologically" fixed: in the very depths of its entire mass it has from the beginning of time been moving in two great opposing currents. One of these carries matter towards states of extreme disintegration; the other leads to the building up of organic units, the higher types of which are of astronomical complexity and form what we call the "living world."

That being so, let us consider the second of these two currents, the current of life, to which we belong. For a century or more, scientists, while admitting the reality of a biological evolution, have been debating whether the movement in which we are caught up is no more than a sort of vortex, revolving in a closed circle; or whether it corresponds to a clearly defined drift, which carries the animate portion of the world towards some specific higher state. There is today almost unanimous agreement that it is the second of these hypotheses which would appear undoubtedly to correspond to reality. Life does not develop complexity without laws, simply by chance. Whether we consider it as a whole or in detail, by examining organic beings, it progresses methodically and irreversibly towards ever higher states of consciousness. Thus the final, and quite recent, appearance of man on the earth is only the logical and consistent result of a process whose

first stages were already initiated at the very origins of our planet.

Historically, life (which means in fact the universe itself, considered in its most active portion) is a rise of consciousness. How this proposition directly affects our interior attitudes and ways of behavior must, I suggest, be immediately apparent.

We talk endlessly, as I was saying a moment ago, about what is the best attitude to adopt when we are confronted by our own lives. Yet, when we talk in this way, are we not like a passenger in the Paris to Marseilles express who is still wondering whether he ought to be traveling north or south? We go on debating the point—but to what purpose, since the decision has already been taken without reference to ourselves, and here we are on board the train? For more than four hundred million years on this earth of ours (or it would be more correct to say, since the beginning of time, in the universe), the vast mass of beings of which we form a part has been tenaciously and tirelessly climbing towards a fuller measure of freedom, of sensibility, of inner vision. And are we still wondering whither we should be bound?

The truth is that the shadow of the false problems vanishes in the light of the great cosmic laws. Unless we are to be guilty of a physical contradiction (unless, that is, we deny everything that we are and

everything that has made us what we are) we are all obliged, each of us on his own account, to accept the primordial choice which is built into the world of which we are the reflective elements. If we withdraw in order to diminish our being, and if we stand still to enjoy what we have, in each case we find that the attempt to run counter to the universal stream is illogical and impossible.

The road to the left, then, and the road to the right are both closed: the only way out is straight ahead.

Scientifically and objectively, only one answer can be made to the demands of life: the advance of progress.

In consequence, and again scientifically and objectively, the only true happiness is the happiness we have described as the happiness of growth and movement.

Do we want to be happy, as the world is happy, and with the world? Then we must let the tired and the pessimists lag behind. We must let the hedonists take their homely ease, lounging on the grassy slope, while we ourselves boldly join the group of those who are ready to dare the climb to the topmost peak. Press on!

Even so, to have chosen the climb is not enough.

We have still to make sure of the right path. To get up on our feet ready for the start is well enough. But, if we are to have a successful and enjoyable climb, which is the best route?

Here again, if we are to be sure of our ground, we must see how nature proceeds—we must learn from the sciences of life.

## 2. DETAILED SOLUTION: THE THREE PHASES OF PERSONALIZATION

As I said earlier, life in the world continually rises towards greater consciousness, proportionate to greater complexity—as though the increasing complexity of organisms had the effect of deepening the center of their being.

Let us consider, then, how this advance towards the highest unity actually works out in detail; and, for the sake of clarity and simplicity, let us confine ourselves to the case of man—man, who is physically the highest of all living beings and the one best known to us.

When we examine the process of our inner unification, that is to say, of our personalization, we can distinguish three allied and successive stages, or steps, or movements. If man is to be fully himself

and fully living, he must (1) be centered upon himself; (2) be "de-centered" upon "the other"; (3) be super-centered upon a being greater than himself.

We must define and explain in turn these three forward movements, with which (since happiness, we have decided, is an effect of growth) three forms of attaining happiness must correspond.

1. First, *centration*. Not only physically, but intellectually and morally too, man is man only if he cultivates himself—and that does not mean simply up to the age of twenty . . . If we are to be fully ourselves we must therefore work all our lives at our organic development, by which I mean that we must constantly introduce more order and more unity into our ideas, our feelings and our behavior. In this lies the whole program of action, and the whole value and meaning (all the hard work, too!) of our interior life, with its inevitable drive towards things that are ever-increasingly spiritual and elevated. During this first phase each one of us has to take up again and repeat, working on his own account, the general labor of life. Being is in the first place making and finding one's own self.

2. Second, *decentration*. An elementary temptation or illusion lies in wait for the reflective center which each one of us nurses deep inside him. It is present from the very birth of that center; and it consists in fancying that in order to grow greater

each of us should withdraw into the isolation of his own self, and egoistically pursue in himself alone the work, peculiar to him, of his own fulfillment, that we must cut ourselves off from others, or translate everything into terms of ourselves. However, there is not just one single man on the earth. That there are, on the contrary, and necessarily must be, myriads and myriads at the same time is only too obvious. And yet, when we look at that fact in the general context of physics, it takes on a cardinal importance—for it means, quite simply, this: that, however individualized by nature thinking beings may be, each man still represents no more than an atom, or (if you prefer the phrase) a very large molecule; in common with all the other similar molecules, he forms a definite corpuscular system from which he cannot escape. Physically and biologically man, like everything else that exists in nature, is essentially plural. He is correctly described as a “mass-phenomenon.” This means that, broadly speaking, we cannot reach our own ultimate without emerging from ourselves by uniting ourselves with others, in such a way as to develop through this union an added measure of consciousness—a process which conforms to the great law of complexity. Hence the insistence, the deep surge, of love, which, in all its forms, drives us to associate our individual center with other chosen and specially

favorable centers: love, whose essential function and charm are that it completes us.

3. Finally, *super-centration*. Although this is less obvious, it is absolutely necessary to understand it.

If we are to be fully ourselves, as I was saying, we find that we are obliged to enlarge the base on which our being rests; in other words, we have to add to ourselves something of "the Other." Once a small number of centers of affection have been initiated (some special circumstances determining their choice), this expansive movement knows no check. Imperceptibly, and by degrees, it draws us into circles of ever-increasing radius. This is particularly noticeable in the world of today. From the very beginning, no doubt, man has been conscious of belonging to one single great mankind. It is only, however, for our modern generations that this indistinct social sense is beginning to take on its full and real meaning. Throughout the last ten millennia (which is the period that has brought the sudden speeding-up of civilization) men have surrendered themselves, with but little reflection, to the multiple forces (more profound than any war) that were gradually bringing them into closer contact with one another. But now our eyes are opening, and we are beginning to see two things. The first is that the closed surface of the earth is a con-



stricting and inelastic mould, within which, under the pressure of an ever-increasing population and the tightening of economic links, we human beings are already forming but one single body. And the second thing is that through the gradual buildup within that body of a uniform and universal system of industry and science our thoughts are tending more and more to function like the cells of one and the same brain. This must inevitably mean that as the transformation follows its natural line of progress we can foresee the time when men will understand what it is, animated by one single heart, to be united together in wanting, hoping for, and loving the same things at the same time.

The mankind of tomorrow is emerging from the mists of the future, and we can actually see it taking shape: a "super-mankind," much more conscious, much more powerful, and much more unanimous than our own. And at the same time (a point to which I shall return) we can detect an underlying but deeply rooted feeling that if we are to reach the ultimate of our own selves, we must do more than link our own being with a handful of other beings selected from the thousands that surround us: we must form one whole with all simultaneously.

We can draw but one conclusion from this twofold phenomenon which operates both outside our-

selves and inside ourselves: that what life ultimately calls upon us to do in order that we may be, is to incorporate ourselves into, and to subordinate ourselves to, an organic totality of which, cosmically speaking, we are no more than conscious particles. Awaiting us is a center of a higher order—and already we can distinguish it—not simply beside us, but *beyond* and *above* us.

We must, then, do more than develop our own selves—more than give ourselves to another who is our equal—we must surrender and attach our lives to one who is greater than ourselves.

In other words: First, be. Second, love. Finally, worship.

Such are the natural phases of our personalization.

These, you must understand, are three linked steps in life's upward progress; and they are in consequence three superimposed stages of happiness—if, as we have agreed, happiness is indissolubly associated with the deliberate act of climbing.

The happiness of growing greater—of loving—of worshipping.

Taking as our starting-point the laws of life, this, to put it in a nutshell, is the triple beatitude which is theoretically foreseeable.

Now what is the verdict of experience on this

point. Let us for a moment go directly to the facts, and use them to check the accuracy of our deductions.

First, there is the happiness of that deep-seated growth in one's own self-growth in capabilities, in sensibility, in self-possession. Then, too, there is the happiness of union with one another, effected between bodies and souls that are made to complete one another and come together as one.

I have little need to emphasize the purity and intensity of these two first forms of joy. Everybody is in basic agreement on that point.

But what shall we say about the happiness of sinking and losing self in the future, in one greater than ourselves? . . . Is not this pure theorizing or dreaming? To find joy in what is out of scale with us, in what we can as yet neither touch nor see. Apart from a few visionaries, is there anyone in the positivist and materialist world we are forced to live in who can concern himself with such an idea?

Who, indeed?

And yet, consider for a moment what is happening around us.

Some months ago, at a similar meeting, I was telling you about the two Curies—the husband and wife who found happiness in embarking on a ven-

ture, the discovery of radium, in which they realized that to lose their life was to gain it. Just think, then: how many other men (in a more modest way, maybe, and in different forms and circumstances), yesterday and today, have been possessed, or are still possessed, even to the point of death, by the demon of research? Try to count them.

In the Arctic and Antarctic: Nansen, Andrée, Shackleton, Charcot, and any number of others.

The men of the great peaks: the climbers of Everest.

The laboratory workers who ran such risks: killed by rays or by the substances they handled—victims of a self-injected disease.

Add to these the legion of aviators who conquered the air.

And those, too, who shared man's conquest of man: all who risked, or indeed gave, their lives for an idea.\*

Make a rough count, and when you have done so, take the writings and letters left by these men (such of them as left any), from the most noteworthy of them (the everyday names) to the most humble (those whose names are not even known)—the air-mail pilots who twenty-five years ago were pioneer-

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\*"You know that my life is an oblation, joyfully and conscientiously offered, with no selfish hope of reward, to the Power which is higher than life" (Rathenau).

ing the airroute across America for human thoughts and loves, and paid for it, one after another, with their lives. What do you find when you read what they confided to paper? You find joy, a joy that is both higher and deeper—a joy full of power: the explosive joy of a life that has at last found a *boundless* area in which to expand.

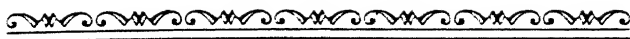
Joy, I repeat, in that which knows no bounds.

What generally saps and poisons our happiness is that we feel that we shall so soon exhaust and reach the end of whatever it is that attracts us: we know the pain of separation, of loss by attrition—the agony of seeing time fly past, the terror of knowing how fragile are the good things we hold, the disappointment of coming so soon to the end of what we are and of what we love.

But when a man has found, in an ideal or a cause, the secret of collaboration and self-identification (whether it be close or distant) with the universe as it advances, then all those dark shadows disappear. The joy of worshipping so spreads over the joy of being and the joy of loving as to allow them to expand and grow firmer (Curie, for example, and Termier were admirable friends, fathers, and husbands): it does not lessen or destroy the earlier joys, and it holds and brings with it, in its fullness, a wonderful peace. Its source of nourishment is inexhaustible, because it gradually becomes one with

the very consummation of the world in which we move; by the same token, moreover, it is safe from every threat of death and decay. Finally, it is, in one way or another, constantly within our reach, since the best way we have of reaching it is simply, each one of us in his own place, to do what we are able to do as well as we can.

The joy of the element that has become conscious of the whole which it serves and in which it finds fulfillment—the joy that the reflective atom draws from awareness of its function and completion within the universe which contains it—this, both logically and factually, is the highest and most progressive form of happiness I can put before you and hope that you may attain.



## 9. *The Fundamental Rules of Happiness*

So much for pure theory. We may now consider in what ways it can be applied to our individual lives.

We have just made it clear that true happiness is a happiness of growth—and, as such, it awaits us in a quarter characterized by:

1. unification of self within our own selves;
2. union of our own being with other beings who are our equals;
3. subordination of our own life to a life which is greater than ours.

What consequences do these definitions entail for our day-to-day conduct? And what practical action should we take in order to be happy?

I can, of course, satisfy your curiosity and assist your good will by only the most general indications; for it is here that, quite rightly, we come up against any number of problems of taste, accident, and temperament. Life becomes established and progresses in nature and structure only by reason of the very

great variety of its elements. Each one of us sees the world and makes his approach to it from a particular angle, backed by a reserve of vital energy, with its own peculiarities that cannot be shared by others. (We may note, incidentally, that it is this complementary diversity which underlies the biological value of "personality.") Each one of us, therefore, is the only person who can ultimately discover for himself the attitude, the approach (which nobody else can imitate), that will make him cohere to the utmost possible degree with the surrounding universe as it continues its progress; that cohesion being, in fact, a state of peace which brings happiness.

Bearing these reservations in mind, we can, following our earlier lines of thought, draw up the following three rules of happiness.

1. If we are to be happy, we must first react against our tendency to follow the line of least resistance, a tendency that causes us either to remain as we are, or to look primarily to activities external to ourselves for what will provide new impetus to our lives. We must, it is true, sink our roots deep into the rich, tangible, material realities which surround us; but in the end it is by working to achieve our own inner perfection—intellectual, artistic,



moral—that we shall find happiness. The most important thing in life, Nansen used to say, is to find oneself. Through and beyond matter, spirit is hard at work, building.—*Centration*.

2. If we are to be happy we must, second, react against the selfishness that causes us either to close in on ourselves, or to force our domination upon others. There is a way of loving—a bad and sterile way—by which we try to possess rather than to give ourselves. Here again, in the case of the couple or the group, we meet that same law of maximum effort which governed the progress of our interior development. The only love that brings true happiness is that which is expressed in a spiritual progress effected in common.—*Decentration*.

3. And if we are to be happy—completely happy—we must, third, in one way or another, directly or through some medium that gradually reaches out further afield (a line of research, a venture, an idea, perhaps, or a cause), transfer the ultimate interest of our lives to the advancement and success of the world we live in. If we are to reach the zone where the great permanent sources of joy are to be found, we must be like the Curies, like Termier and Nansen, like the first aviators and all the pioneers I spoke of earlier: we must re-polarize our lives upon one greater than ourselves. Do not be afraid that

this means that if we are to be happy we must perform some remarkable feat or do something quite out of the ordinary. We have only to do what any one of us is capable of—become conscious of our living solidarity with one great Thing, and then do the smallest thing in a great way. We must add one stitch, no matter how small it be, to the magnificent tapestry of life; we must discern the Immense which is building up and whose magnetic pull is exerted at the very heart of our own humblest activities and at their term; we must discern it and cling to it—when all is said and done, that is the great secret of happiness. As one of the most acute, and most materialist, thinkers of modern England, Bertrand Russell, has put it: it is in a deep and instinctive union with the whole current of life that the greatest of all joys is to be found.—*Super-centration*.

There you have the real core of what I have to say to you; but, having reached that point, there is one more thing that I owe it to you and to myself to say, if I am to be absolutely truthful.

I was recently reading a curious book [*The Anatomy of Frustration*], in which the English novelist and thinker H. G. Wells writes about the original views recorded earlier by an American biologist and businessman, William Burrough Steele, that bear precisely on the point we are now considering, human

happiness. Steele tries, with much good sense and cogency, to show (just as I have been doing) that since happiness cannot be dissociated from some notion of immortality, man cannot hope to be fully happy unless he sinks his own interests and hopes in those of the world, and more particularly in those of mankind. He adds, however, that, put in those terms, the solution is still incomplete; for if we are to be able to make a complete gift of self we must be able to love. And how can one love a collective, impersonal reality—a reality that in some respects must seem monstrous—such as the world, or even mankind?

The objection which Steele found when he looked deeper, and to which he gave no answer, is terribly and cruelly to the point. My treatment of the subject would, therefore, be both incomplete and disingenuous if I did not point out to you that the undeniable movement which, as we can see, is leading the mass of mankind to place itself at the service of progress is not "self-sufficient": if this terrestrial drive which I am asking you to share is to be sustained, it must be harmonized and synthesized with the Christian drive.

We can look around and note how the mysticism of research and the social mysticisms are advancing, with admirable faith, towards the conquest of the

future. Yet no clearly defined summit, and, what is more serious, no *lovable* object is there for them to worship. That is the basic reason why the enthusiasm and the devotion they arouse are hard, arid, cold, and sad: to an observer they can only be a cause for anxiety, and to those who aspire to them they can bring only an incomplete happiness.

At the same time, parallel with these human mysticisms, and until now only marginal to them, there is Christian mysticism; and for the last two thousand years this has constantly been developing more profoundly (though few realize this) its view of a personal God: a God who not only creates but animates and gives totality to a universe which he gathers to himself by means of all those forces which we group together under the name of evolution. Under the persistent pressure of Christian thought, the infinitely distressing vastness of the world is gradually converging upwards, to the point where it is transfigured into a focus of loving energy.

Surely, then, we cannot fail to see that these two powerful currents between which the force of man's religious energies is divided—the current of human progress, and the current of all-embracing charity—need but one thing, to run together, and complete one another.

Suppose, first, that the youthful surge of human

aspirations, fantastically reinforced by our new concepts of time and space, of matter and life, should make its way into the lifestream of Christianity, enriching and invigorating it; and suppose at the same time, too, that the wholly modern figure of a universal Christ, such as is even now being developed by Christian consciousness, should stand, should burst into sight, should spread its radiance, at the peak of our dreams of progress, and so give them precision, humanize, and personalize them. Would not this be an answer, or rather *the* complete answer, to the difficulties before which our action hesitates?

Unless it receives a new blood transfusion from matter, Christian spirituality may well lose its vigor and become lost in the clouds. And, even more certainly, unless man's sense of progress receives an infusion from some principle of universal love, it may well turn away with horror from the terrifying cosmic machine in which it finds itself involved.

If we join the head to the body—the base to the peak—then, suddenly, there comes a surge of plenitude.

To tell you the truth, I see the complete solution to the problem of happiness in the direction of a Christian humanism: or, if you prefer the phrase, in the direction of a super-human Christianity within

which every man will one day understand that, at all times and in all circumstances, it is possible for him not only to serve (for serving is not enough) but to cherish in all things (the most forbidding and tedious, no less than the loveliest and most attractive) a universe which, in its evolution, is charged with love.

Lecture given by Teilhard de Chardin in Peking,  
28 December 1943



### III

## *Three Wedding Addresses*





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## *10. At the Wedding of Odette Bacot and Jean Teilhard d'Eyry*

Mademoiselle, my dear Jean,

When I look at you both here, united for all time, my old professional habits reassert themselves, and I cannot help glancing back at the two roads—your two roads—which for so long seemed to be independent of one another, have just suddenly converged, and here and now, in a moment, are about to run as one. And you will not be surprised that, presented with a meeting so unexpected and yet prepared for so long, I am filled with wonder and joy, as though I were witnessing another of life's triumphs.

Your road, Jean, began far from here, under the heavy clouds of the tropics, in the flat paddy-fields enclosed by the blue silhouette of Cape Saint-Jacques. It called for nothing less than this vigorous mixture of cold Auvergne and the Far East worthily to continue in you a fearless, far-ranging mother, and that legendary "Uncle Georges," too. When I

was only a child, I used occasionally to gaze with admiration at his face, beside the already white-haired grandmother, in that rather dark, and half-Chinese, drawing room in the Rue Savaron.

By tradition, and by birth, you are of Asia; and that is why, from time to time, you have gone back to Asia to breathe in its quality.

But what are these journeyings of the heart and mind? Only you could draw up that itinerary, the stages and detours through which your being had to travel before the emergence in the end of the man you are today. At home, as a young cadet, everywhere, what influences were at work, what meetings came about, what attractions were felt, what choices made! . . . How slender the fibers in the web from which our lives are suspended!

Finally, having found your way through the shifting labyrinth of external and internal forces, you have succeeded in finding your soul. In this inner domain (for it is within you much more than outside you) to which life has brought you, are you not going to find yourself alone and lost? Men are crowded together and have to force their way along our roads, metaled or earthen; even in the skies they are already beginning to find themselves cramped. But in the thousand times vaster and more complex domain of the mind, each one of us, the more he is human (and therefore unique), the more he is con-

demned by his very success to wander, endlessly lost. You might well have feared, Jean, that where such a succession of chances had driven your ship no other vessel, except by some even greater chance, would be found.

And it was then, Mademoiselle, in that very habitation of souls in which it seemed impossible that two beings should find one another, that you, like the princess in a fairy story, quite naturally appeared. That, among some thousands of human beings, the eyes of two individuals should meet is in itself a remarkable and precious coincidence: what, then, can we say when it is two minds that meet?

While you, Jean, were engaged in the long circumnavigation during which the real core of every living creature—its power to love—was maturing within you, you, Mademoiselle, were following a different curve, the rhythm of whose approach was nevertheless wonderfully harmonized; and so the two of you were passing through those successive cycles whose culmination we are witnessing here today.

Through your family origins you, too, blossomed on a stem whose roots lie deep in one of France's ancient provinces—Touraine instead of Auvergne—which has about it something warmer and gentler; and, to crown this, you had that finishing touch which only the atmosphere of Paris can give. From

your childhood you, too, learned to revere that same historic academy and the exact science of honorable warfare. In a circle of three children—which included yet another Jacqueline—with an exceptional mother, you, too, received that generously liberal upbringing, firmly based on Christian principles, which has given so wonderfully harmonious a balance to your development. And so it was—with how astonishing a symmetry in your destinies—that, without realizing it, you were gradually moving towards your meeting with the man who, in equal ignorance, was moving towards you.

I referred, a moment ago, to fairy tales. Who was the fairy who, without ever breaking her thread, worked alone to weave today into one perfect whole the double web of your two lives?

Was it only chance that blindly worked this miracle? Must we really resign ourselves to believing that the value of the loveliest things around us depends simply on what is unpredictable, unusual, and in consequence impermanent, in the confluence of the elements from which they seem to us to have emerged?

True enough, there are days when the world appears to be one vast chaos. Great, indeed, is the confusion; so great that if we look at ourselves we may very well reel with dizziness at the prospect of our very existence. With such heavy odds against

us, is it not most improbable that we should find ourselves whole and entire, and living—as single individuals, let alone as two? We wonder, then, whether true wisdom may not consist in holding on to every chance that comes our way, and immediately drawing all we can from it. It would be madness, surely, to take any further risk with the future and to strive after a life that is even more improbable because even more elevated.

For years now, Jean, my work has been such that every day of my life has necessarily been lived under the shadow of the improbability of life's successes. And once again it is this improbability which I meet today when I look at the happiness of both of you together.

So: since you have asked me to speak today, allow me to tell you what, after a long confrontation with the splendid reality of the world, is my dearest and most profound conviction. I began, like everyone else, by being impressed by the superior importance, among events, that must be accorded to what comes lower down the scale, and to the past. Then, unless I was to cease to understand anything that goes on within me or around me, I was obliged to shift my point of view and accord absolute supremacy to the future and the greater.

No, I believe what gives the universe around us its consistence is not the apparent solidity of the

ephemeral materials from which bodies are made. Rather is it the flame of organic development which has been running through the world since the beginning of time, constantly building itself up. With all its weight behind it, the world is being impelled upon a center which lies ahead of it. Far from being impermanent and accidental, it is souls, and alliances of souls, it is the energies of souls, that alone progress infallibly, and it is they alone that will endure.

What is imponderable in the world is greater than what we can handle.

What radiates from living beings is more valuable than their caresses.

What has not yet come is more precious than what is already born.

That is why what I want to say to you now, Jean—what I want to say to both of you—is this:

“If you want, if both of you want, to answer the summons (or respond to the grace, for that is the better word) which comes to you today from God-animated life, then take your stand confidently and unhesitatingly on tangible matter; take that as an indispensable bulwark—but, through and above that matter, put your faith in the bulwark of the intangible.”

Put your faith in the spirit that lies behind you; by that I mean the long series of unions similar to

your own which throughout the ages have accumulated, to pass on to you, a great store of healthy vigor, of wisdom and of freedom. Today this treasure is entrusted to your keeping. Remember that you are responsible for it to God and the universe.

Put your faith, then, in the spirit that lies ahead of you. Creation never comes to a halt. It is through you two that life seeks to prolong itself. Your union, therefore, must not be a self-enclosed embrace; let it express itself in that deliberate act, infinitely more unifying than any inactivity, which consists in an effort directed towards one and the same, ever-greater, passionately loved, goal.

And finally, in a phrase that sums up all the rest, put your faith in the spirit which dwells between the two of you. You have each offered yourself to the other as a boundless field of understanding, of enrichment, of mutually increased sensibility. You will meet above all by entering into and constantly sharing one another's thoughts, affections, dreams, and prayer. There alone, as you know, in spirit which is arrived at through the flesh, you will find no surfeit, no disappointments, no limits. There alone the skies are ever open for your love; there alone lies the great road ahead.

At this very moment can you not feel this spirit,

to which I am urging you, concentrating upon you; can you not feel its mantle spread over you?

The united love of so many kinsfolk and friends gathered together, the warmth and purity of wishes transmitted, through some subtle medium, from Auvergne, from Touraine or Poitou, and from the Côte d'Argent, too; the blessings sent by those whom we no longer see; and above all the infinite tenderness of Him who sees in you two, forming one, the welding of one more precious link in his great work of creative union.

In very truth, grander than the external, material ceremonial which surrounds and honors you, it is the accumulated forces of an invisible loving-kindness which fill this church.

I pray that this spiritual ardor may come down upon your nascent love, and preserve it for eternal life. Amen.

14 June 1928



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*11. At the Wedding of M. and  
Mme de la Goublaye de Ménorval*

Mademoiselle, Monsieur,

At this moment, when your two lives are being made one in this chapel, I can think of nothing more appropriate nor more valuable to offer you than a few words in praise of unity.

Unity: an abstract term, maybe, in which philosophers delight; and yet it is primarily a very concrete quality with which we all dream of endowing our works and the world around us. To the apparent fragmentation of material elements, to nature's capricious movements, to the irregularity of color and sound, to the busy confusion of the masses of mankind, and the undisciplined vacillations of our aspirations and thoughts—what is it that, through all that is best in our activities, we are trying to do, if not constantly to introduce a little more unity? Science, art, politics, ethics, thought, mysticism: these are so many different forms of one and the same impulse towards the creation of some harmony; and

in that impulse is expressed, through the medium of our human activities, the destiny and, I would even say, the very essence of the universe. Happiness, power, wealth, wisdom, holiness: these are all synonyms for a victory over the many. At the heart of every being lies creation's dream of a principle that will one day give organic form to its fragmented treasures. God is unity.

What conscious line of action, then, will enable us to pursue and attain this divine unity?

Will it, perhaps, be attained by each one of us setting himself up at the heart of his own little world as an exclusive center of domination and enjoyment? Does our happiness lie in relating to ourselves, to the greatest possible degree, all that lies outside us? Shall we be happy only if we each become our own little god?

That you two should be here today, bride and bridegroom, shows how completely you have been untouched by this illusion of the self as center. One of the most pernicious hallucinations that life meets as it awakes to intelligence is the closed concentration of the element on itself; and by this you have not been misled. You have seen that the being in each one of us does not contain its own final pole; it represents a particle which is destined to be incorporated in higher syntheses. Your example shows us not the unity of isolation—but the unity of union.

It is the unity of union that you have chosen; and you have chosen well. But this higher unity that is promised to the elements which seek for one another in a common principle that brings them together—how precisely can that unity reach its perfection in you two? How, being two, will you be more truly one? The question brings me to the very point I want to deal with in these few words; and my answer is: "By never relaxing your effort to become more yourselves by the giving of yourselves."

Because union brings fulfillment, it can appear to be a final term, a resting-place. In fact, nothing has a greater share of life's incessantly progressive nature. If the elements are to be able to coalesce, they must spend a long time in first developing in themselves those complementary values which can combine with one another. And when at last the elements meet, they still cannot link up with one another except by advancing continually further along the line of their own fulfillment. True union, as it brings together, so, and precisely so, it differentiates. It is a continual discovery and a continual conquest.

Perhaps my language is a little ponderous, but it is in those terms that I look for an explanation of your past, and of the promise that the future holds for you.

Your past . . . When we look at you, Mademoi-

selles, in this festive setting we, your friends, who have so often seen you deep in the study of rocks or maps, we who have followed you in our thoughts through distant and dangerous expeditions—we might well have a vague feeling that your life has gone off at a tangent, and that you have become a different woman. "What was the good of conquering *this*, in order finally to choose *that*?" And the right answer to our question is, "What is the good of *this* except as a preparation for *that*?" Never, Mademoiselle, never—should you, impossible though it be, ever be so tempted—regret those long hours in the laboratory, all the careful work that went into those lengthy reports, those strenuous journeys through the forests of Madagascar. During these adventures of mind and body, were you not developing in yourself the perfect companion for a man who himself—for this is true of you, the bridegroom, too, is it not?—belongs to the race of those who work for the earth and explore its secrets? It took life millions of years to mold, in the work of creation, the heart and mind that your mother passed on to you, Mademoiselle. And it still called for all the work and all the hazards of your early youth to perfect in you a being with the capacity to give its self.

And now that same law of which I was speaking, which required that each of you should, alone,

make ready for union, is again waiting for you to complete one another, each through the other, in union. What will be the never-ended story of your mutual conquest? This is known to God alone, who is about to bless you. But for my part, I can, on the authority of all human experience, assure you of this: that your happiness will depend on the width of the field you allow to your hopes. An affection that is narrowly closed in on itself stifles body and soul. If you are to ensure the uninterrupted progress that is essential to the fruitfulness of your union, you must extend still further the horizons that have bounded the years of your development.

You will be happy, happy as our prayers and wishes would have you be, only if your two lives come together and extend each other, boldly launching themselves upon the future in a passionate drive towards one greater than yourselves.

15 June 1935

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## *12. At the Wedding of Christine Dresch and Claude-Marie Haardt*

My dear Christine, my dear Claude,

Life is, indeed, full of strange coincidences and, perhaps, strange designs. As Christmas was approaching in the year 1932, when I was accompanying Georges-Marie Haardt on a journey across the deserts of Central Asia, who would have guessed that sixteen years later it would fall to me to address these words to you, as you in your turn are about to set out on another great adventure, that of your two combined lives? And since the coincidence probably disguises a secret design of destiny, may not this plan contained in material things (or worked out by Providence) be that I should pass on to you both—and more particularly to you, my dear Claude, in the presence of the mother to whom you owe so much—the admonition, the watchword, that your father, that great inspirer and great traveler, continually offered us by his example, mile after mile over the tracks of Asia, as he urged us to press

on and keep our eyes fixed on the peaks that towered ahead of us?

He crossed the Sahara, he crossed Africa and China; and these undertakings, each with its different problems, were all (as is every living reality) built upon a solid material structure. Each was carefully worked out with an eye to a precise end. And yet, beyond any economic goal, it was always towards some sort of distantly envisaged dream that the fleet of trucks and half-tracks followed him as their leader across the sand. For those who were privileged to take part, these expeditions were always to some extent, and will always remain in their memories, the following of a guiding star . . .

My dear Christine, my dear Claude, now that your turn has come, do you too, imitating your father's grand demeanor in a different sphere, enter into life with your feet firmly on the ground but your eyes fixed on what is greater and finer than you. The temptation which besets love, you know, and makes it barren, is to rest upon what is possessed—it is a shared selfishness. To find one another, and to be truly made one, you must seek no other road but that of a strong passion for a common ideal. Between the two of you (and here the very structure of the world forces upon you a law that cannot be broken)—between the two of you, remember, no unblemished union can exist except in

some higher center which brings you together.

May that center soon be the child!

And, come what may, may that center be the excitement and joy of each discovering and completing the other, ever more fully, in heart and mind!

And, above all, may that center in one way or another (depending on what is your own particular way) be the God before whom and in whom you are on the point of uniting your two lives for ever: God, the only definitive center of the universe; not the distant God of common formulas, but God in the form in which he must, and strives to, show himself incommunicably to you if only you surrender unconditionally to the inner force which is at this moment operating to bring you together.

21 December 1948















(continued from front flap)

three fundamental attitudes towards life (the attitudes of pessimists, pleasure seekers, and enthusiasts); distills from the discussion his own fundamental rules of happiness that anyone can apply; and points the way for each person to become fully him- or herself and fully alive—which is, the author explains, the key to true, lasting happiness.

Throughout *On Love and Happiness*, Teilhard de Chardin traces out the theme that, if we are to become truly who we are, we must “give ourselves away”—to each other, and to God. This idea, and others of equal importance, is expressed in a very personal way in the three wedding addresses that close the book. Here the human quest for happiness and the need for love are seen as blending “in a passionate drive towards one greater than [our]selves.”

*Pierre Teilhard de Chardin* (1881–1955) was a priest, scientist, author, and philosopher. His highly influential books include *The Phenomenon of Man*, *The Divine Milieu*, *Human Energy*, and *Writings in Time of War*.

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